



## Thematic Ideas and Plans for Teachers

### Love

The following is one of several different themes that can be used in Middle and/or High School classrooms to engage students in various subjects. Literature, Music, History, Visual Art, Science, Math and Activism can all be addressed by using African American Registry. This site can provide material to draw from, create from, and explore.

These Unit plans are constructed to make use of the site, to encourage ways of creating lessons that are interdisciplinary, and interactive, while still meeting standards.

So often *teaching from a theme* can in itself be inclusive and deep as opposed to teaching separate units on “black poets”, “African American music”. In this way we do not “other” a culture, race or community, but rather weave them into the inclusive world we want to create in our classrooms while still emphasizing the importance of their unique identity.

As you will see, the Registry provides a natural resource into many themes that connect to student lives, concerns and passions.

**Note: You can pick or choose among the suggestions for each Thematic Unit. It could be an activity from the Unit that takes one day; or you may want to pick and choose what activities and lessons you want to do that amount to one week of exploration and instruction. The Registry is ideal in its flexibility. These Units aim to be flexible as well.**



## **MDE Social Emotional Goals—All Are Part of Every Unit Plan for the Registry**

Self-control of feelings and behavior  
Shared use of space and materials  
Identify of self in relations to others  
Social and emotional understanding  
Relationships and social interactions with familiar adults  
Relationships and social interactions  
Conflict negotiation  
Responsible conduct as a group member

### Standards Addressed in the Unit: Love

Standards addressed in this unit include

Citizenship and Government --Civic Skills, 8.1, 9.1  
Geography—9.3,  
Historical Thinking Skills—9.  
United State History—Indigenous and Slave labor-9.4.4.16.5  
United States History—Slaves struggle for rights-9.44.19.4  
United States History—Jim Crow –racism 9.4.4.20.5

Language Arts:

Conventions of English when writing or speaking: 6.11.1.1  
Consulting Reference Materials 6. 11. 44  
Evaluate Content in Diverse Media 6.5.77  
Write Narratives and Other Creative Texts—7.7.3.3- 12 th grade  
Prepare for and Participate in range of conversations –7.9.1.1- grade 12  
Communicate using traditional or digital multimedia formats—7.9.8.8  
Write Narratives and other Creative Texts—9.7.3.3

**Theme: Love**

There are multiple meanings and examples of what love is. Yet it often remains a mystery or a cause for confusion among humankind. How do you know if someone loves you? Can your parents, grandparents, guardians love you and still treat you in a way that seems unfair? To say you love sports and also use the same word---love---to say you love God shows how versatile this word can be, and what a range of experience it can encompass. In many ways love is a mystery to many, a certainty for others, a disappointment at times and a fulfilling experience at others. This expanse of the subject of love makes it a fine theme for students to explore.

**Intersections:** Literature, history, music and art, science and psychology are all subjects that “love” touches on.

**Age Range:** Grades 7-12

**Goal:** This unit takes what may seem like a simple concept: love and expands on it. Love has been the impetus for visual art and song for centuries. It is at the center of many religions. Love is also a concept young people are curious about, want to understand, rarely talk about in school. “Why doesn’t anybody talk about love anymore?” is a question Mahmoud El Kati, a historian, professor, teacher and community activist asks teachers and students alike. This unit will give students a chance to explore the concept of Love, in a way they find most crucial to their own life. Students will be shown examples of love from many disciplines.

**Materials:** Each student should have their own *Love Journal*. They can design the cover, decorate the pages, choose the example(s) of love they want to explore.

**Introducing the Unit:**

Merriam- Webster Dictionary gives multiple examples of love:

- 1.Strong affection for another arising out of kinship or personal ties maternal love for a child
- 2.Attraction based on sexual desire: affection and tenderness felt by lovers: After all these years, they are still very much in love.
- 3.Affection based on admiration, [benevolence](#), or common interests: love for his old schoolmates
- 4.An assurance of affection: give her my love
- 5.Warm [attachment](#), enthusiasm, or devotion: love of the sea
- 6.The object of attachment: devotion, or admiration: baseball was his first love
- 7.Unselfish loyal and benevolent concern for the good of another: such as the fatherly concern of God for humankind, brotherly concern for others



**Step 1-** Ask students to keep a Love Journal. Make it clear this journal will be a private one.

Tell them to copy these various examples of love into their Journal, leaving five or six lines between each example. Or they can cut and paste these from a handout, fitting three to a page.

**Step 2-** Have a class discussion about what each of these means. Does love mean the same thing to their parents, to grandparents as it means to them? Look at each category and discuss it in the context of history, change, generations, culture.

**Step 3-** Ask them to give examples of each kind of love *in their own life* after each example in their journal. They will not have to read these aloud.

**Step 4” Watch the video [Black Love, Black Critique, Nothando Zulu](#).** What do you think she means when she says she “loves her people”? She cites the reconstruction period in US history as an example of what African Americans did for each other after the Civil War. She sees this as a form of love: doing for others. Take time to research the Reconstruction to find out more about this time in our history.

**Step 5** Discuss with each other, what a “new Reconstruction” would look like. What would our world and our country be like if we did “Do Unto Others” as Nothando Zulu suggests. Are there examples from your life that illustrate that we are presently doing for others what they cannot do for themselves?

### Activities:

1. Ask students to read the poem [Rhapsody](#) on the Registry website. It is deceptively simple. He loves song and change and even sorrow. He is aware of what comes from having an *open heart*. Finally, he mentions dreams. Look at your list of what love is in your own life. In what ways can you add to this list of your loves, after reading the Braithwaite poem? Choose one and write an essay or poem or song from it. Let your mind wander. See what you come up with.

2. There have been many scientific articles, and psychology studies about the power and importance of love. Take some time to research this theme. Pick one article to explain to the class. You may decide to look at the way blood pressure behaves around a person we love. You may want to explore what the absence of love can mean in the life of a child. This will take some time: to sift through topics to take notes on one that appeals to you. Simply google the topic: “Science of Love” and see what you come up with.

3. [Black Love Day Celebrated](#). This is an interesting concept and idea. Read the selection from the Registry. Look at the different concepts and think about how any of these can be part of your overall picture of love. Look at the video that goes with it of



[Adena Williams Losten](#) talking about the Black community she comes from and why she loves this community and what it means to her:

List ways that your community and family support you. How does your sports team express the bond you have? How does your church, synagogue or mosque fit in with the importance of love? What would you do to celebrate a Day of Love in your school? Community?

4. Show the video from Voices That Guide Us: [Brian Hughes-Kasoro](#) is speaking of celebrating, not only the big moments in our communities and lives, but also the small things that happen. In a sense he is also saying that our country, and our history is complicated and full of despair as well as uplift. Talk, write, discuss about your relationship to your country. Do you feel a love of country? What do you love about it, what needs work?

Meet in a small group and put together project, be it art, music, poetry, personal stories, about your country, where you are from and what you love and what you despair about being part of the USA. Present to class.

5. [Dee Dee Bridgewater](#). Music is a common language of love. Dee Bridgewater talks about her friendship and musical relationship with Ray Charles. Look at the clip of [Summers](#) talking about a specific kind of drumming that he loves. Both these musicians love what they do, and how it expands their world. What kinds of music do you love? Do you love to dance? Do you love to sing, turn the volume up in your car radio as you drive down the street? Write about your connection to music.

Interview friends or elders about what music they like. If you can, find YouTube clips of the music and bring it to the class when you present your interview to your classmates. Note how musical tastes change over time. Write a brief research paper on the history of a type of music...history of jazz, blues, pop.

## 6. Read

In her poem, [Frances Harper](#) writes about the love of reading. This was an important freedom her people who were slaves did not have. They risked their lives to learn to read. Her love of freedom was a part of this poem, as well. What are concepts and privileges you have that you might take for granted? The freedom to read may be one. The freedom to say what you mean, to speak your mind, may be a freedom you have or want to have. The freedom to go to school, to get an education may be another. Think about the love of freedom and what it means to you.

7. a. **Class projects;** Read the poem by Naxim Hikmet, [“Things I didn’t know I loved.”](#) He was a prisoner for 18 years for writing poems that his government in Turkey did not like. In other countries people are put in prison for writing what they believe. What would you be willing to go to prison for? What do you love enough that you would risk a great deal for? Make a list in your Love Journal.



b. What would you miss the most if you were not able to go out into the world.

[Etheridge Knight](#)

lists the people he has loved when he was in prison. In his poem *The Idea of Ancestry* he really is talking about his life. Read his story and watch the video that accompanies it with Ishmael Reed. Look for books, poems, stories about love by African Americans. Read one of these and write a response to the book of at least five pages. Include quotes for the book that are meaningful to you.

c. As a class, create a community I Never Knew I Loved poem. Ask each student to contribute five lines or five examples of what he or she takes for granted, what they did not realize they love.

Put this in the form a large poster.

d. Extend this project by asking others, especially elders, what they love that they would risk themselves for, or what they love that they do not often appreciate: sounds, sights, tastes.

Make copies and leave them at sites around where you live: grocery stores, galleries, bus stops. This is a giant love poem to who you are, who your elders are, what your world is to you